

FROM : Loughrey

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Feb. 11 2000 12:37PM P17

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I/We Claim

1. A method of accounting for postage charges in respect of batches of mail items including the steps of:-  
5 storing an accumulated aggregate value of postage dispensed in applying postage charges to mail items; storing an accumulated pending value of postage dispensed in applying postage charges to mail items of a first batch of mail items which has not been completed, and in response to completion of the first batch of mail items decrementing the accumulated pending value by a value of postage relating to the completed first batch of mail items.
2. A method as claimed in claim 1 wherein the step of  
15 storing the accumulated pending value of postage dispensed in applying postage charges to mail items of the first batch of mail items which has not been completed includes storing an accumulated pending value of postage dispensed in applying postage charges to mail items of the uncompleted first batch of mail items and in applying postage charges to further mail items of at least one further batch of mail items which has not been completed.
3. A method as claimed in claim 1 wherein in the step of  
25 storing the accumulated aggregate value of postage dispensed in applying postage charges to mail items the accumulated aggregate value comprises postage dispensed on mail items of the completed first batch of mail items and postage dispensed on mail items of further batches of mail items not completed.
4. A method as claimed in claim 1 wherein in the step of  
35 storing the accumulated aggregate value of postage dispensed the accumulated aggregate value consists only of the postage dispensed in respect of mail items of completed batches of mail items.

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5. A method as claimed in claim 4 including the step of  
incrementing the accumulated aggregate value of postage  
dispensed by the value of postage relating to the first  
batch of mail items in response to completion of said  
5 first batch of mail items.

6. A method as claimed in claim 1 wherein the value of postage relating to the completed batch of mail items is the postage dispensed in respect of said completed batch of mail items.

7. A method as claimed in claim 1 including the step of receiving a message from a mail handling authority in respect of the completed first batch of mail; and  
15 initiating decrementing the accumulated pending value by a value of postage relating to the completed first batch of mail items.

8. A method as claimed in claim 7 wherein the message  
20 includes an indication of an amount of postage charge  
determined by said authority to be due on said completed  
batch of mail; and wherein the value of postage relating  
to the completed batch of mail items is the amount of  
postage charge indicated in the message.

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9. A method as claimed in claim 1 including a step of utilising the stored accumulated aggregate value of postage dispensed and the accumulated pending value of postage dispensed to determine a payment due in respect of postage charges.

10. Apparatus for accounting for postage charges in respect of batches of mail items including:-  
a first memory storing an accumulated aggregate value of  
35 postage dispensed in applying postage charges to mail items;

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Feb. 11 2000 12:38PM P19

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a second memory storing an accumulated pending value of postage dispensed in applying postage charges to mail items of a batch of mail items which has not been completed; and

5 accounting means operable in response to completion of the batch of mail items to decrement the accumulated pending value by a value of postage relating to the completed batch of mail items.

10 11. Apparatus as claimed in claim 10 wherein the first memory stores an accumulated aggregate value of postage dispensed in applying postage charges to mail items of completed batches and in applying postage charges to mail items of the uncompleted batch.

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12. Apparatus as claimed in claim 10 wherein the first memory stores an accumulated value of postage in applying postage charges to mail items of completed batches.

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13. Apparatus as claimed in claim 12 wherein the accounting means is operable in response to completion of the batch of mail items to increment the first memory by the value of postage charges in respect of the completed batch of mail items.

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